Submitted by Dan Levy

## Letters supporting last session's identically worded HB 6341



1232 Turner Street Lansing, MI 48906 517.485.4283 517.485.4303 fax www.iloveoldtown.org

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Representative Paul Condino Michigan House of Representatives Judiciary Committee Chair N0799 House Office Building Lansing Mi, 48909

November 11, 2008

Representative Condino:

I am writing in reference to and support of HB-6341. The Old Town community is a community welcoming of all types of people, regardless of their age, race, gender or orientation. We have a great mix of people with all types of backgrounds and are known to be a welcoming area.

Earlier this year, Old Town fell victim to homophobic graffiti. The message "kill gays" and "kg" was spray painted with bright orange paint on twelve Old Town buildings, eleven of which were owned by straight business/property owners. This brought negative media to Old Town, a district that has struggled to fight a perception of high crime. Businesses and property owners were forced to take the time and effort to quickly remove and paint over the negative message. Two Old Town volunteers quickly stepped up to help remove the paint from both naked and painted brick walls, doors, signs and other areas. These volunteers were not gay, but saw this as an attack on the entire Old Town community and wanted to quickly do what they could to improve the situation. As I previously mentioned, the vast majority of the affected business/property owners were not gay, but were tremendously negatively impacted by this crime.

Old Town takes this issue to heart. We have had issues with gang graffiti in the past. That gang graffiti, however, did not spell out a specific message of hate directed at one group of people. Though this spring's graffiti was directed at one particular group of people, the homophobic and violent message negatively impacted the entire community. All businesses suffered because of the attack directed at the gay community. That the waitresses in the restaurants were not gay, made no impact on the fact that the homophobic graffiti kept customers away. Put simply, the anti-gay graffiti had even more financial impact on the straight Old Town business owners and employees than it did on the gay business owners and employees.

Following the graffiti incident, the entire Old Town community was astounded that the punishment was no different than if the graffiti stated "I love Old Town" or "Go State." Because of the above reasons, I highly encourage you to pass HB-6341.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 517.485.4283 with any questions.

Sincerely,

Jamie Schriner-Hooper

Mission Statement:
To facilitate the socioeconomic development
of Lansing's Old Town area through the promotion of
historic preservation, business recruitment and community outreach.



Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing on behalf of ACCESS and our organization's support of HB6341. As a non-profit human service organization, we are committed to the basic principles of civil rights and social justice. ACCESS is in full support of the Michigan Anti-Bias Crime Act, HB6341, and encourages the House members of the Judiciary committee to pass this bill.

Thank You,

Hassan Jaber

**Executive Director** 



Ms. Jazmine Steele 3054 W. Grand Boulevard, Suite 3-600 Detroit, MI 48082

I am the Access Advocacy Specialist of Disability Network Oakland & Macomb. As an advocate for people with disabilities (both voluntarily and professionally for the past 18 years) I can not think of anything more critical than protecting citizens who live with disabilities from being victimized. I have heard hundreds of stories of hate crimes toward people with disabilities occurring over the years. It continues simply because there really is no 'stop gap' in place to prevent it other than educational efforts to spread awareness. It's not enough!

Here at Disability Network Oakland & Macomb, we offer 'Information & referral, Independent Living Skills, Peer Support, Student Centered Transition, Nursing Home Transition, Empowerment Training and Advocacy based on the rights given to people with disabilities by laws like the ADA, The Rehabilitation Act, Fair Housing etc. But when someone comes to us with a story of how they or their entire family is being targeted because of a disability, there is little more we can offer other than to ask the family to report it to the police. Please give us this ammunition too!

We support the proposed Hate Crime legislation HB 6341. We know that hate crimes occur every day toward people who are unable to defend themselves. We know that people with disabilities are often the target of hate crimes simply because they can appear vulnerable and are viewed as easy prey.

I and the staff @ Disability Network Oakland & Macomb agree with this proposed legislation.

Sincerely.

Dorothea A. Bawks

Access Advocacy Specialist

Disability Network Oakland & Macomb

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16645 15 Mile Road

Clinton Township, MI 48035

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www.dnom.org

NAMI Metro Board Trustee

## **Great Lakes Region**

September 2, 2008

The Honorable Paul Condino, Chairman
The Honorable Andy Coulouris, Majority Vice-Chair
The Honorable Tonya Schuitmaker, Minority Vice-Chair
House Judiciary Committee
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Honorable Members of the Michigan House Judiciary Committee:

The Great Lakes Region of B'nai B'rith International (BBI) strongly supports a revision of the Michigan Anti-Bias Crime Statute as proposed in House Bill 6341.

The Great Lakes Region is Michigan's presence of B'nai B'rith International (BBI), the global voice of the Jewish community. BBI -- the most widely known Jewish humanitarian, human rights, and advocacy organization -- has a long and distinguished history of promoting tolerance and encouraging diversity. Our actions and advocacy promote these issues in world bodies, including the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Organization of American States. In the United States, tolerance and diversity are key goals of our congressional agenda and educational and community programs.

It is important that our legal system provides the option of enhancing penalties for bias-motivated crimes. Effective hate crimes legislation is an important tool in protecting the rights of all people to be free from bias-motivated crime and it promotes an inclusive and civil society critical to the social and economic well-being of all of Michigan's citizens.

Not only do accessible hate crimes laws have a deterrent effect, it makes it clear that such crimes impose a special dimension of harm on its direct victim as well as the community the perpetrator(s) target. Additionally, events in Michigan have demonstrated a compelling need for improving our current law. The FBI reports that Michigan has the third-highest number of reported hate crimes in the country, and it is widely recognized that hate-crimes are often significantly underreported.

The addition of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression of gender are, unfortunately, necessary and overdue additions to the law given the targeting of these groups. The addition of disability fills a gap in the legislative protection extended to the disabled.

B'nai B'rith is committed to assisting and supporting passage of this legislation as well as helping educate the community on its desirability and necessity. We look forward to working with you to this end.

Sincerely,

Todd D. Barry

Community Relations Chair

Peter A. Perlman

Regional President

Donald H. Cohen Regional Director

## american citizens for justice, inc. I asian american center for justice P O Box 851163, Westland, Michigan 48185 248-347-1663

November 14, 2008

Daniel Levy Chief Legal Officer Michigan Department of Civil Rights 3054 W. Grand Blvd., Suite 3-600 Detroit, MI 48202

Re: MI-ABCs Bills

American Citizens for Justice fully supports passage of the Michigan Anti Bias Crime Statute bills, HB 6340 and 6341.

ACJ believes everyone's civil rights are best protected by providing those rights to all people who are subjected to discrimination and intolerance.

American Citizens for Justice is a 501(C)(3) civil rights organization that focuses on civil rights for the Asian American community. ACJ began with the Vincent Chin baseball bat beating death case in 1983, and continues to be involved in civil rights advocacy, court watching, and education.

Let us know when and how ACJ can be of support for passage of MI ABCs.

Sincerely,

Roland Haracy Roland Hwang

President

Frances Kai Hwa Wang sh Frances Kai-Hwa Wang

**Executive Director**